

# ART AT EXECUTIVE AGENCY: MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF KOREA'S NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

Founded in 1969, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) was transformed into an executive agency in 2006 and became the subject of performance management. The purpose of this study is to understand the historical and contextual background of performance management reform in South Korea and its application to MMCA, and also to analyze the mechanism of performance evaluation and its consequence on the management of a national art museum. For the analysis, MMCA's annual reports, performance evaluation records, public announcements and proposed schemes of previous directors, and other related news, articles and available information from 2007 to 2017 were collated, and the changes in performance evaluation measures (by index weight) were chronologically compared, reorganized and interpreted in regard to the internal situation of the museum and its directorship. The main finding was that overtime performance index weight in the evaluation result shows a growing emphasis on the directorship term related, urgent and more quantifiable performance goals, which are in support of the further reform of MMCA as a corporate entity. Also, the changes in evaluation composition signal a trend that the most prioritized task of each directorship term differed, and this ultimately caused less quantifiable performances, such as art collection and research related tasks, to weaken in emphasis as part of the performance. In conclusion, the performance management of MMCA from 2007 to 2017 had a beneficial side in promoting the result-based performance specifically and had functioned as a governing tool that effectively engaged and pressured certain urgent tasks to completion, but it also had a weakness in keeping the long term stability of directorship and provoking the continuous development of all parts of art related core competency.

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<sup>1</sup> This study was supported by a National Research Foundation of Korea Grant from the Korean Government (NRF-2017S1A3A2065838).

The consequence of performance management can be argued as limiting the understanding/evaluation of directorship competency to the achievements that are distinguished and identifiable, therefore the result is difficult to argue for its justification and sufficiency as a representable score of the art museum performance.

**Keywords:** Performance management; Executive Agency; National art museum in Korea (MMCA); Performance index weight analysis.

**Citation:** Kim Se-Hee (2020). Art at Executive Agency: Measuring the Performance of Korea's National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. *Public Administration Issues*, no 5, (Special Issue I, electronic edition), pp. 125–148 (in English); DOI: 10.17323/1999-5431-2020-0-5-125-148

*“The dilemma of the current time is that nonprofit arts organisations are encouraged to be independent, innovative and entrepreneurial, but at the same time accountabilities to stakeholders increase the requirement for compliance. This creates a paradox.”*

(Renschler, Ruth. (2014). *Arts Governance: People, Passion, Performance*. Routledge. 1 Edition. P. 69).

## Introduction

A museum is an institution that functions to serve the public which is constantly changing. With this basic objective, a museum plays a role in asserting history and constructing a collective identity. A national museum, in particular, creates the origins of the myths of a nation (Bouchard, 2014; Lévi-Strauss, 2001). The professionals within this institution, as public servants, choose timely significant materials and contents, and prepare them for public viewing and education. Therefore, the operation of national museums in most countries has been largely funded by government ministries or state-owned agencies. However, since the implication of New Public Management (NPM) which highlights the enterprise governance of bureaucracy, cultural facilities including national museums have become targeted towards growing more as self-governing units. Such systematic transformation has increased the responsibility of autonomous or semi-autonomous government agencies to report figures of performance and to increase competitiveness in earning money while serving the citizens as customers (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Savoie, 2006).

The executive agency system, which was initiated in the U.K. and spread to New Zealand, Canada, and Japan including other OECD countries, is an organizational management technique that provides more autonomy to national institutions and organizations while adapting the goal driven performance based evaluation mechanism. The main idea behind this system is that for the improvement of public service quality, the organizational structure has to be adjusted rather than the public officials themselves (Jenkins, Caines & Jackson, 1988). Since the late 1990s economic crisis in South Korea, agencification, alongside privatization, private consignment and decentralization as part of the NPM reform, was considered as a pathway to improving the efficiency, responsiveness and competitiveness

of its government. Hastily, a competitive and customer-driven administrative reform in the West was chosen as the model to benchmark.

In April 2000, executive agencies were established in South Korea as “legally separate bodies from the central ministries”, which signified the first step “towards a quasi-contractual governing arrangement” (Kim & Cho, 2014, p. 215). This agencification movement extended to national institutions in the cultural sector; the reform took place for the National Theater of Korea and National Museum of Science in 2000, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in 2006, and Asia Culture Center in 2016. Among these government funded cultural enterprises, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) has a distinguishing competency in art collecting, collection preserving, exhibition curating and promoting art related programs and activities. In most of the tasks that require a level of expertise from a specific field, the amount of budget directly enhances or hinders its performance. Therefore, ironically, the professional arts organization has to prove “the democratic requirements for politically distributed grants” (Gstraunthaler & Piber, 2012, p. 361) with performance results that signal popular appeal, in order to gain an increased or at least maintained level of government support and attention.

The socially beneficial performance of an art museum embodies the unquantifiable experience of visitors in “aesthetic dimensions” (Gstraunthaler & Piber, 2007, p. 365). Substantially, the core assets of an art museum include having a high-quality art collection and the ability to pursue timely research and curation that are inventive; it is often difficult to prove advancement in the enhancement of expertise of such assets. Moreover, a cultural organization which deals with human creativity shares the issue of measuring and managing the performance. Cohen and Pate argue that “creativity simply *cannot* be measured in a way which satisfies all involved” (Cohen & Pate, 2000, p.116), and the engagement of government in this sector tend to “misunderstand and misrepresent both the artistic impulse and the world in which artists operate” (Cohen & Pate 2000, p.104). Such limitations and concerns are evident, when generally applying the term “performance” to the arts and more controversially when trying to “manage” performance in an arts organization.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to examine performance management reforms outside of a Western context, this study attempts to disclose the case of a national arts organization in South Korea that had been through an administrative reform and has accumulated data and information for over a decade as the subject of performance management. Further, this study attempts to emphasize the inevitable struggle of an arts organization in current times, which entails having the obligation to engage actively with the public and increase marketability in order to better satisfy its customers’ needs, while at the same time having to strengthen its distinguishable core value as a professional organization. It will be argued that performance management can be used as a meaningful governing tool to partake in this sort of dilemma situation, especially in guiding the subject to present the performance results that are evident and achievable in a short-term or within the directorship term. As a chosen case from the cultural sector in South Korea, the MMCA will be analyzed in perspectives to draw out the historical context of performance management reform and its consequences. The focal point will be on its growth in branches and the directorship transitions since the agencification of MMCA in 2006.

## Theoretical Background and Research Context

### Concurrent Issues of Museum Management since the New Museology

A museum has long been considered as a distinct space that collects and preserves artistic and historical creations. In the 1960s, a museum was considered mainly as a building for a collection (Douglas, 1960). The reason for containing and preserving a collection was to provide the opportunity to study, research and enjoy. However, the public function of museums became a matter of criticism for being collections-centered and for their isolation and elitism (Hudson, 1977). The need for the enhanced publicity and accessibility of the traditional museums, which was the motivation behind the New Museology, has shifted the discourse of museums to their social and political role, educational function in spreading ideas, and building community-based relationships (Rounds, 2012; Mairesse & Desvallées, 2010; Hopper-Greenhill, 2000; Stam, 1993; Weil, 1990). Eventually, the museums' elevated social accountability required them to produce an evident outcome; the expectation is that increased accessibility of museums will show higher number of visitors, more income generating activities and wielding of "considerable economic power" (Weil, 1997, p. 249).

The focus shift in a museum's function, from the house of a distinct collection to a place which warrants cultural rights, increased the need for a marketing strategy in museum management. Likewise, art museums, where their permanent art collections used to be the only or a major factor of their reputation and visitor attraction point, headed toward becoming visitor-centered institutions. This meant not only focusing on exhibiting rare and significant artworks, but also building/reconstructing the museum in the scale and form of a national landmark, managing an exquisite café, restaurant and shopping space, and offering various types of activities. In the art museum setting, this sort of trend created terminologies such as "superstar museums" (Frey, 1998) and "the blockbuster art exhibition" (Millikin, 1996).

The superstar museum phenomenon, which was proposed by Frey in a study involving an economic analysis of world famous museums in major cities, can be summarized as museums fiercely fighting to have the five "superstar" characteristics because they are "forced to offer *total experience*" (Frey, 1998, p. 113). The five qualities of the superstar museum are 1) being a must visit place for tourists, 2) having a large number of visitors, 3) collecting world renowned paintings, 4) ranking the architecture of the museum building as world class, and 5) generating a significant portion of income from museum shops and restaurants, while impacting the local economy with its existence. The blockbuster art exhibitions are large scale, oftentimes world traveling, special art shows that actively include the elements of fame, popular culture and the business side of art (Millikin, 1996). Similar to the flamboyant characteristic of blockbuster movies, they are created with mega scale investments. In order to secure the popularity of highly invested exhibitions, museums have to borrow, if not own, extremely rare, valuable, and well-known artworks that people will want to line up to see. The competition for art within the museum circle has driven up the ticket prices of many popular art exhibitions, just as in private sector businesses, and increased the dependency on corporate sponsorship significantly.

Both these museum phenomena similarly imply the concurrent issue of intensifying competition in the cultural sector and the general public's increasing options regarding leisure activities to choose from. Inevitably, even the national museums that had previously provided non-profit and education-based services exclusively, had to be adjusted by incorporating some market-related elements, such as entertainment, popularity and consumable culture. Also in such a dynamic situation, the required skill sets of museum directors became much more complex. Before the widespread appearance of New Museology, museum directors most often had strengths as scholars, particularly in the humanities field with expertise in history. Recently, in order for the museum to provide more public benefit while creating an innovative business model with distinguishable cultural activities, the CEO type of museum director with fundraising, marketing and profit generating business management experience became much needed (Suchy, 2000; Donnelly, 2010). In a case study of the national science museum in Italy, Bagdadli and Paolino argued that the strategy setting differs depending on the personal background of the museum director, and his/her personal view of the museum mission can be directly reflected in the organizational performance; a museum director's appropriate and active role can ultimately result in improving both the organization's efficiency and legitimacy (Bagdadli & Paolino, 2006).

As Bagdadli and Paolino's study asserts, government owned museums are not exempt from concurrent museology forces when the NPM (institutional change) is chosen as a necessary reform by the government. Without a doubt, national museums with an abundant and secured funding source will experience less external pressure, but many major national museums in OECD countries that are privatized, incorporated, or in a semi-autonomous contractual form with its parent government, similarly share the need to provoke and attract the public in order to prove their competency. This demand for evident performance results is arguably initiated by the sudden financial cutback of publicly funded art museums in Western countries due to the 1980s to 1990s public sector reform, and carried out as a way to incorporate the "private sector philosophies on funding" (Rentschler, 2001, p. 2). However despite many differences in local situations and cultures, the privatization/commercialization of art museums was benchmarked worldwide to a different degree.

The MMCA in South Korea is one of the classic examples that had been engrossed in building a new superstar museum-like landmark scale branch in the center of Seoul under the leadership of its former president Lee Myung-bak. Inaugurated in November 2013, the MMCA Seoul is located in the center, near the commercial art gallery districts in Jongno-gu. It contains one of the largest museum shops in the world, and an independent organization that manages its profit generating businesses in the Seoul-branch. But despite the growth in museum space, the MMCA as an entity has remained in the same or at a similar level of financing and operating autonomy, and organizational capacity and structure. Without undergoing any major systematic and legal adjustments, the appointed museum directors during the branch expansion period (2009–2018, one more branch in Cheongju was inaugurated in 2018) were expected to prove their abilities as organizational leaders, art specialists, promoters, fundraisers and skilled

business managers, all at the same time. This unrealistic situation is similar to that of the NPM reform that was argued as a “failure” in South Korea, due to the lack of consideration of the local culture (Im, 2003) and the bureaucratic tendency to remain in traditional form (Kim & Han, 2015).

### **Research Context 1: Overview of the History of MMCA and its Agencification**

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) was founded in 1969 as an administrative bureaucratic organization, and the curatorial position was first regulated within the organization in 1989. For this 20 year delay in securing curatorial staff, as well as the lack of education programs to nurture such professionals within the country until 1992, both the Korean arts community and the public’s distrust in the professionalism of MMCA was an ongoing problem until the early 2000s (The 100 Years History of Korean Museum Compilation Committee, p. 263). In response to this issue, the government introduced an open recruitment method in appointing a professional art museum director in 2000.

When the MMCA was first publicly notified by the government on the subject of agencification in 2004, the 15<sup>th</sup> museum director Kim Yoon-Soo and staff members at the time strongly opposed this sudden news. The majority of them thought that the government claimed autonomy would not be effective and would be mostly ceremonial. Their opposition was grounded on the lack of evidence and scholarly support of the effectiveness of the executive agency system in South Korea. Substantially, scholars in public administration criticized the limited autonomy given to the agency leader, lawful restrictions and organizational resistances occurring in actual practice, which were meant to have prevented any actual institutional or performance improvement (Kim, 2003; Choi, 2006). More opposition came from the communities of art professors, the association of art galleries, critics and artists throughout South Korea. Over 200 university art professors collectively formed a declaration against the agencification and argued that this reform will damage the future of Korean arts and the cultural sector. In short, those opposed to the proposal of transforming the MMCA into an executive agency were skeptical of the business-like administration and result-based evaluation in a non-profitable, public art museum. Furthermore, performance management was commonly thought of as the consequence of a financial crisis driven budget reduction (Park & Joo, 2010), therefore the art circle did not consider it as an ideal way to accurately understand and measure the improvement of an art museum.

As a response to the strongly opposing views in the Korean art community, the government argued that this institutional reform will strengthen the professional competency of MMCA for a couple of reasons. First, it will allow a quota increase in manager positions for teams of researchers, designers, educators and curators. Second, the director of MMCA will have more power over the organization, due to the enactment of a more specified operational regulation. Third, the competent director will autonomously set and take stronger responsibility in achieving the annual performance goals. In summary, the key factor that the government emphasized as a positive side of reform was strengthening the di-

rectorship and team-based organizational management; the emphasis was on appointing a competent field specialist as a museum director and retaining more decision making authority, which was previously exercised by the public servants with no expertise in the art field.

Eventually, MMCA was transformed into an executive agency in 2006 after a few negotiations with the opposing groups. However only two years after the agencification, the government once again selected the MMCA as an organization to be considered for incorporation; MMCA turning into a corporate body meant increasing the level of operating autonomy even more than as an executive agency, as well as increasing more responsibility in financial independence. From 2008, the incorporation of MMCA was an intensely debated topic inside and outside of the museum until the end of 2017, when the formal announcement against it was made under the current Moon Jae-in presidency. Inevitably, a decade long debate over the incorporation of MMCA prevented due attention to be given to the effect and outcome of the agencification. It was only recently that a few studies focusing specifically on the agencification of MMCA were published (Jung, 2014; Kim, 2019a, 2019b), but still the mechanism and consequence of performance management on this institution has not yet been adequately researched. Accordingly, this study aims to review the history of performance management of MMCA by analyzing performance evaluated results in relation to the directorship term. This effort may add value to the existing understanding of administrative reform in the context of South Korea, where the directorship/team leadership was considered as the key factor for enhancing the performance of arts organizations.

### **Research Context 2: Directorship History of MMCA and the Issue of Incorporation**

The history of MMCA directors is wide and varied regarding length of term and individuality in expertise, professional experience and background. Before the appointment of the 9<sup>th</sup> director Lee Kyung-Sung, the eight previously designated directors were all administrative bureaucrats and six out of eight of them (except the 6<sup>th</sup> (term: 1973.12.7.–1977.12.6.) and the 7<sup>th</sup> (term: 1977.12.24.–1980.10.3.)) had an average term of one year. As regards to the length of directorship, the director Lee Kyung-Sung, who was an art critic, had the longest term of 97 months; his first term as the 9<sup>th</sup> director was from 1981.8.18.–1983.10.7., and his second term as the 11<sup>th</sup> director was from 1986.7.29.–1992.5.27. Following this, the second longest term was 62 months by the 12<sup>th</sup> director Lim Young-bang and the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> director Kim Yoon-Soo, followed by the 48 months term of the 14<sup>th</sup> director Oh Kwang-Soo.

Since the early 2000s, each directorship was regulated to a 3-year-contract based term and this contract could be extended on the last year depending on how the performance was perceived and evaluated (up to five years when the performance is ‘outstanding (우수)’ and to maximum of three additional years when the performance is ‘excellent (탁월)’). However, this ambiguous standard for the term extension still remains an unresolved issue, and there has not been a director who formally termed over three years since the agencification of MMCA in 2006. Also, since then, the background and professional experience of the MMCA direc-

tors varied more widely. For instance, the appointed non-bureaucrat/art specialist directors before the agencification (from the 9<sup>th</sup> director to the 16<sup>th</sup> director) were all males from the Korean art circle and had careers as either art critiques, art historians, artists or art related community leaders. But the 17<sup>th</sup> director was the first CEO type leader with no experience in the art field, the 18<sup>th</sup> director was the first woman and the 19<sup>th</sup> was the first non-Korean director (from Spain) with no Korean language skills.

The 17<sup>th</sup> director (term: 2009.2.23.–2011.10.31.), Bae Soon-Hoon<sup>2</sup>, who was appointed immediately after the former president Lee Myung-Bak's "MMCA Construction Plan" announcement, sought the Bilbao effect in Seoul by constructing the MMCA Seoul. He insisted from the beginning of his term that the incorporation is a necessary pathway for MMCA to overcome obstacles, such as the lack of resources, and restrictions in managing the organization and finance. To support this path, director Bae launched art education classes for senior managers and CEOs of public institutions and promoted strategic fund-raising projects. As mentioned above, the incorporation of MMCA was a significantly debated issue from 2008 to 2017, and director Bae was the first director to have actively encountered this issue and pushed forward with multiple organizational reform under the given right as a director of an executive agency.

Similarly, the 18<sup>th</sup> director (term: 2012.1.20.–2015.1.19.) Chung Hyung-Min proposed from the beginning that increasing the self-sufficiency of MMCA was one of her main objectives as a director. In order to achieve this goal, the Tate Modern in the U.K. was suggested as a benchmarking case for its transformation and financial growth from 2000 to 2012<sup>3</sup>. During the term of director Chung, a new sponsorship organization consisting of 15 members, who represent the conglomerates and large corporations in Korea, was established and the MMCA Seoul was finally inaugurated in 2013. She also authorized a new organization called the MMCA Foundation within the Seoul branch, in order to manage the new sponsorship organization created in 2011 and the businesses in MMCA Seoul (museum shop, parking lot, food and beverage etc.). The foundation later expanded its managing role to other MMCA branches' profit generating businesses.

During the term of 19<sup>th</sup> director (term: 2015.12.14.–2018.12.13), Bartomeu Marí Ribas, more sophisticated museum shop businesses such as book publishing became active. At an interview, director Marí expressed his support towards MMCA's incorporation. He thought of the incorporation as "transforming into a dynamic, flexible and productive organization", therefore with this change MMCA "can better fulfill its obligations"; he also stated that from his experience

<sup>2</sup> Bae Soon-Hoon graduated from Seoul National University (College of Engineering) and received a Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He served as a professor at KAIST, a CEO and president of Daewoo Electronics. He served as a minister for the Ministry of Information and Communication in 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Tate Modern, which is a national art museum focusing on modern and contemporary art like MMCA, was heavily dependent on government support at its opening in 2000 (with 20% financial independence). However it reached the financial independence of 60% after 12 years of operation. For more information visit "History of Tate Modern", Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/history-tate/history-tate-modern> (accessed: 30 Jan, 2020).



in European institutions “expanding flexibility will lead to better performance”<sup>4</sup>. Also during this term in 2016, a 300 page long research regarding the incorporation of MMCA was published<sup>5</sup>. It consisted of a detailed case analysis of other countries’ incorporated museums, a survey and interview result of MMCA staff regarding the reform, and practical strategies for fundraising and options for future organizational reform.

Despite these three consecutive directorships putting efforts into achieving the incorporation of MMCA, legalizing this reform was rejected multiple times either during the course of discussions in congress or by the newly established government. The incorporation of MMCA was rejected mainly due to the concern over excessive commercialization of the museum, which could potentially weaken the professionalism in exchange for the market-driven activities. Also, not all staff of MMCA agreed to this change. Many resisted because this reform meant that their current status as permanent public servants had to be altered to contract-based or temporary public servants. Lastly, it was argued that MMCA was not reaching the level of self-sufficiency possible for incorporation, and that the issue lay in the weak donation culture in South Korea.

A commonly overlooked portion in reviewing the recent history of MMCA directorship is the executive transition period. In most world-renowned museums, the transition of museum director is considered heavily and the search for a new director begins well ahead of its current directorship’s termination date. However, in South Korea this has not been a commonly followed process and an inevitable period without a director has occurred.

Table

### Museum Directors, Their Term and Transition Period since 2006

Museum Director	Term	Transition period with no director
The 15 <sup>th</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> director, Kim Yoon-Soo	2003.9.6.–2006.9.5. 2006.9.6.–2008.11.7.	From the 16 <sup>th</sup> to 17 <sup>th</sup> Over 3 months: 2008.11.8.–2009.2.22.
The 17 <sup>th</sup> director, Bae Soon-Hoon	2009.2.23.–2011.10.31.	From the 17 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup> Over 2 months: 2011.11.1.–2012.1.29.
The 18 <sup>th</sup> director, Chung Hyung-Min	2012.1.20.–2015.1.19.	From the 18 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> Over 10 months: 2015.1.20.–2015.12.13.
The 19 <sup>th</sup> director, Bartomeu Marí Ribas	2015.12.14.–2018.12.13.	From the 19 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> Over 1 month: 2018.12.14.–2019.1.31.
The 20 <sup>th</sup> director, Yun Bummo	2019.2.1.–2022.2.1.	

<sup>4</sup> Park Hyun-Joo. “Director Marí ‘My obligation is to spread Korean modernity to the whole world.. Next year craft exhibition expected’”, Newsis, published 2016.03.13 15:15, modified 2016.03.15 14:36 Available at: <https://news.joins.com/article/19715655> (Accessed: 30 Jan, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> This research project can be attained at the following link: [http://www.prism.go.kr/homepage/entire/retrieveEntireDetail.do;jsessionid=84AF6F6FD080C22A1CDF2A8BD6D3A447.node02?cond\\_research\\_name=&cond\\_research\\_start\\_date=&cond\\_research\\_end\\_date=&research\\_id=1371000-201600109&pageInd ex=514&leftMenuLevel=160](http://www.prism.go.kr/homepage/entire/retrieveEntireDetail.do;jsessionid=84AF6F6FD080C22A1CDF2A8BD6D3A447.node02?cond_research_name=&cond_research_start_date=&cond_research_end_date=&research_id=1371000-201600109&pageInd ex=514&leftMenuLevel=160) (accessed: 30 Jan, 2020).

Since the agencification of MMCA in 2006, MMCA has operated without a museum director for more than 16 months in total (see tab.). Noticeably between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> director transition, the museum director was absent for almost a year from January to December of 2015. During this prolonged directorship vacuum period, the government was heavily criticized for not appointing a director (either incapable of selecting or purposefully leaving as vacant), and having the head of administrative bureaucrats serve as an acting director. The role of museum director is to initiate, lead and achieve significant tasks in a timely manner. The absence of this position slows down many processes and discontinues progressing steps, even collapsing the morale of the entire organization by making them focus on the bare minimum designated duty. Therefore, it can be argued that the South Korean government has been influencing significantly over the directorship of MMCA by practicing its power in not only selecting the person in charge, but also in deciding on when this will happen, for how long (extend or terminate the term) and to what extent the director will have the right to lead.

## Proposition and Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to disclose a national art organization case in South Korea that had been under the influence of performance management and administrative reform. The above theoretical review and two parts of the research context have set the background in understanding the MMCA and its former directors' objectives and achievements since the agencification in 2006. The significant points of the context can be summarized as these three points.

First, public institutions like art museums have gone through a theoretical and practical phenomenon shift that emphasized heavily on their responsibility to engage with the public and market-driven forces. And the adaptation of administrative (performance-based) reform in many parts of the world, including South Korea, has been behind this shift. Second, the South Korean art circle strongly resisted the initial administrative reform of MMCA as an executive agency, which made the art museum a subject of performance management. However, the incorporation, which meant heading towards a more competitive and enhanced autonomous body with self-sufficiency responsibility, has been prepared internally by the MMCA directors since 2008 (from the 17<sup>th</sup> director onward). This path was taken only two years after the agencification, even though MMCA was not ready for such advancement organizationally and culturally. Third, the South Korean government focused on strengthening the obligation and leadership of museum directors in order to achieve the performance enhancement and inauguration/successful management of a new superstar-type museum branch. The government also maintained a considerable controlling power over the selection and termination of MMCA directorship, and the performance evaluation result was in direct relation to this decision.

From these three major points as the background, a main proposition can be suggested in regard to the directorship and performance management of MMCA, which is the possibility of performance management functioning in support of the

directors working towards the incorporation and enhancing the visible/noticeable museum performance to better prepare for this future reform. To verify this main proposition, a few more detailed arguments can be proposed. First, the composition of performance evaluation results will reflect the difference of each directorship and the most urgent/significant mission at hand. In other words, there will be some sort of distinguishable trend in performance items that each director (either purposefully or as a given responsibility) is focused on and dedicated to more heavily, in order to highlight the achievements of each term. Second, the performance evaluation of MMCA will show more focus on the quantifiable performance results compared to the core competency related performance, which are more quality based and having less to do with supporting the incorporation. These two propositions together will show the mechanism of performance management of MMCA, which goes hand in hand with the directorship focusing on provable and identifiable performance goals and results that better support building on the basis of the museum's incorporation and business situation. In order to verify these propositions, MMCA's accumulated annual performance evaluation results, annual reports, public announcements and proposed schemes of the former directors, and other related news, articles, and available information are reviewed from 2007 to 2017.

In South Korea, the performance evaluation report of the executive agencies that have legal appraisal responsibility is published annually as a unit. The evaluation of each agency is taken in two steps; the first part is done by professionals in the field specific to the agency, and the second part is done by a committee organized to review the entire body of executive agencies. More specifically, the Executive Agency Management Committee, under the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, reviews the management competency evaluation report and the agency-specific-business evaluation report submitted by each department. Then the committee organizes a comprehensive evaluation group and goes through a written and due diligence evaluation of these submitted reports, and finalizes the report in the four areas of "leadership and strategy, organizational efficiency, performance and feedback, and appropriateness of the agency specific evaluation".

In the case of MMCA, the agency-specific-business evaluation is pursued by an evaluation group of five, which consists four people from the Korean art circle (from a university, research center, other museum, and art space/business etc.) and one deputy director/administrative official from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. This evaluation group organizes 1~3 group meetings and a field visit to MMCA or a face-to-face MMCA personnel meeting in order to process the performance evaluation. Based on the submitted annual performance goal in the previous year (the evaluation process begins in January, the first part ends by February and the final report comes out by June), performance evaluation indicators and their index weight are decided within the group meeting, and a final score out of 100 is concluded as a result. This first part of the performance evaluation of MMCA is once again reviewed by the operation council of seven professionals/representatives from the Korean art circle and one deputy director/administrative official from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The report is then submitted to the Executive Agency Management Committee for the second part of the evaluation.

In this study and analysis, the first part of the evaluation (the agency-specific-business evaluation), which consists of specific evaluation indicators, index weight, and individual scores and final score, is focused on. For the convenience of referring to the indicators of specific interest, the terms “Public-Oriented” and “Core Competency” performance/measures will be used. The “Public-Oriented Measurements” (POMs) will include systematically quantifiable performance results of MMCA, such as visitor numbers, ticket sales, and visitor satisfaction appraisal. Also, this concept will be comprehensively used and interpreted with the organizational and leadership effort in enhancing quantifiable results and public activities, such as investing in building/reconstructing infrastructures for better accessibility and serviceability, and increasing promotion, marketing and public gathering activities. The “Core Competency Measurements” (CCMs) will include performance related to strengthening the exhibition curation, art collection (acquisition, preservation etc.) and research capability (building a database for research, publish papers and academic journals etc.), which are the professional tasks specific to the art museum. These duties and their improvement in quality are not completely quantifiable, therefore less accurate as measures but still considered as a main portion of the MMCA performance goal and result in the evaluation process.

## Analysis and Results

### Analysis of Public-Oriented Measurements

From analyzing the performance evaluation indicators of MMCA from 2007 to 2017, the Public-Oriented measurements (hereafter, POMs) could be argued as being constituted by the five major evaluation factors: 1) promoting and improving educational and leisure/cultural activities, 2) number of exhibition visitors, 3) general publicity (including publicity of exhibition), image improvement and marketing investment, 4) customer satisfaction, and 5) constructing/planning and executing MMCA Seoul. Out of these five items, the two comparable components are the measurements regarding the activities and visitor number.

**Figure 1: Weight (%) of MMCA Seoul from 2007 to 2017**



Once these two performance results are compared in the weight (%) portion, as in Figure 1, it is evident that in the performance evaluation, more emphasis has been given to promoting and improving the quality of activities, such as the education, leisure and culture related programs and events, compared to increasing the number of exhibition visitors.

This does not mean that public activities within MMCA were more important than the exhibitions, but it signifies that at least in the annual performance evaluation, museum performance in engaging people through activities and events have been conceded with more attention compared to the visitor count.

Specifically, the performance of promoting and improving the museum activities weighted over 20% of the total performance composition in 2009, and from 2015 to 2017. Notably, 2009 was a unique year when the first non-art related director (the 17<sup>th</sup> director) was appointed, especially in an attempt to increase efficiency in constructing the MMCA Seoul. This was the only year when the 'number of exhibition visitor' index was not included in the evaluation composition, and activities involving the public were focused slightly more compared to adjacent years.

When the visitor count index is analyzed more in detail, it is evident that the first few years of appraisal did not consider this measure significantly (less than 3% from 2007 to 2009). This could signify that the original mechanism of MMCA performance evaluation was not necessarily intended to judge its competency and organizational effort on the basis of recorded visitor count.

A significant finding regarding this measure is that in 2011, 2014, and 2017, which are the last years of each directorship term, an increase of weight to 10% is shown. The last year of directorship term was explained in the Research Context Part 2 as the most critical year in proving the effectiveness of leadership in order to get the renewal/extension of the contract.

Therefore, it could be argued that the number of exhibition visitors, which signifies the success in exhibition curation and its promotion, is considered with more weight when the competency of the museum director became the topic of heated debate.

The POMs in relation to directorship can be analyzed in more detail with the changing trend of index weight in different types of museum activities. Once the activities are divided into educational and leisure/cultural types (see Figure 2), it is evident that the latter activities gained far less emphasis from 2008 to 2012 compared to the ones with educational quality. But from 2014 to 2016, these two types of activities are treated mutually.

Further, this dynamic is completely flipped in 2017, when the educational activities index was not specified but cultural activities that promote "arts and cultural experience" weight 25% of the entire annual performance. "Experiencing" can be argued as having both elements of knowledge learning and enjoyment, but it is considered as a part of cultural activities because the term "education" was not included in the title of the index, which is different from the previous years.

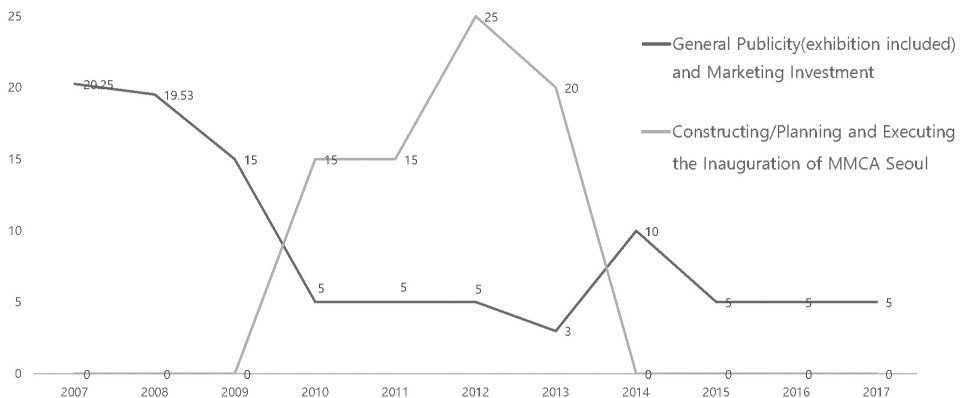
**Figure 2: Weight (%) Educational and Leisure/Cultural Activities from 2007 to 2017**



Even though the fluctuating trend does not correlate exactly to each directorship term (see fig. 2), it shows a strong connection. In particular, the three consecutive years of 0% weight of leisure/cultural activities and reducing weight of educational activities from 2010 to 2012 reflect the performance evaluation becoming lenient towards this type of museum performance (or considered as less important) during the MMCA Seoul construction period. However naturally, providing the opportunity for people to visit the museum became a much more important issue after the inauguration of the new branch. Therefore, this table can be analyzed as showing a growing trend of emphasis on promoting and communicating with the public via activities before the construction decision and after the inauguration of a new museum branch.

Similar to the analysis of (fig. 2), the total index weight of educational and leisure/cultural activities in Figure 1 shows a gradual growth from 2007 to 2009, and a downward slope from 2009 to 2013, then growing again from 2014. The total weight reducing rapidly from 2009 is also witnessed in the changing pattern of general publicity and marketing investment measures (see fig. 3). And this can be best interpreted in relation to the performance evaluation prioritizing in the MMCA Seoul construction/planning during this period.

**Figure 3: Weight (%) of General Publicity/Marketing Investment and MMCA Seoul Related Tasks**



As we see in Figure 3, the performance evaluation index regarding the Seoul branch specifically grew from 15% in 2010 and 2011 to 25% in 2012. This 10% increase is rather significant, and even more so because the transition of museum director occurred at the end of 2011. Originally, building a new museum branch in Seoul was the most distinguishable achievement that had to be completed during the 17<sup>th</sup> director's term (the three year contract was from 2009.2.23 to 2012.2.23), but without achieving this goal the director resigned suddenly in October 2011<sup>6</sup>. Accordingly, the next director had to be in charge of completing this mission as soon as possible and follow through as planned. This urgency is reflected in the largest portion of 25% weight in the evaluation of 2012 (fig. 3). But unfortunately, a construction related accident happened in the basement of MMCA Seoul in August 2012, which caused 4 deaths and 25 injured due to a large fire. The 18<sup>th</sup> director in charge at the time was brutally criticized for this incident; the blame was partially on the director because a safety related hazard could not have been prevented in order to meet the unrealistically set deadline for inauguration.

In summary, it is evident that museum directors confronting a major duty such as building a new museum branch took on a heavy responsibility, and during such pressing years, to achieve such a major goal, performance evaluation played a role in pressuring the deadline and governing the directorship. Also, it can be concluded that the mechanism of performance evaluation works in ways to guide performance enhancement towards more symbolic and urgent performance goals, and as a result promoting the museum activities and publicity/marketing tasks were inevitably overlooked during the MMCA Seoul construction/planning years. The analysis of POMs in performance evaluation for the most part supports the first proposition, which claimed a directorship term specific and urgency/importance-prioritizing performance management.

The last index in the composition of POMs that has not been focused on is the customer satisfaction rate (fig. 4).

**Figure 4: Weight (%) of Customer Satisfaction from 2007 to 2017**



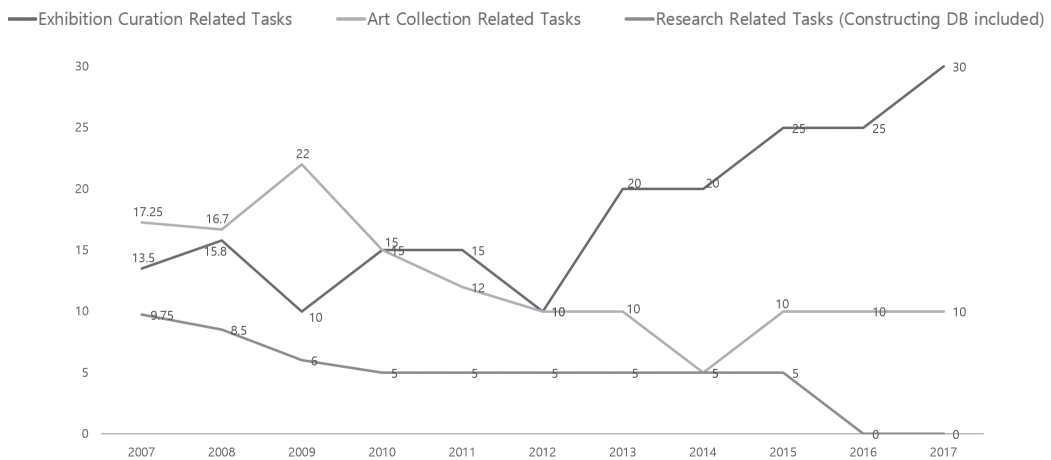
<sup>6</sup> Director Bae resigned after a devastating/humiliating experience at the periodic audit regarding the newly proposed logo and name for the new museum branch in Seoul. The members of the National Assembly who questioned him criticized intensely of his attitude and pose, such as putting one hand in his pocket and sitting with one leg crossed.

The customer satisfaction rate is a measure that is annually conducted through a survey by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. This index is the only measure in POMs that shows no influence of directorship term or any urgent performance goal being focused. The only change in this measure is the 5% increase of weight in evaluation composition; a steady 10% weight from 2007 to 2014 and an increase to 15% from 2015 (fig. 4). 2015 was the year explained in the Research Context Part 2 as a year with no appointed MMCA director for over 10 months. The acting director during these 10 months was the head of administrative organization within MMCA, whose legal status was a bureaucrat of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Therefore, the 5% increase in the customer satisfaction rate in the evaluation composition from 2015 can be interpreted as a sign of change that is initiated by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in order to have more leverage in the performance evaluation of MMCA. The customer satisfaction rate, which is conducted, managed and released under the ministry, is the only index that has not fluctuated and has been steadfastly controlled in the performance evaluation of MMCA from 2007 to 2017.

### Analysis of Core Competency Measurements

The Core Competency measurements (hereafter, CCMs) of MMCA in the evaluation result from 2007 to 2017 are composed by the three major performance indexes regarding the exhibition, art collection and research. These tasks are included in the performance goal as titles such as “execution of high quality exhibition”, “systematic art collection and management”, “constructing a scientific archive system” and “research base expansion”. The evaluated measures of CCMs were gathered, divided into three specific tasks and chronologically compared in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Weight (%) of Individual POMs in Detail from 2007 to 2017



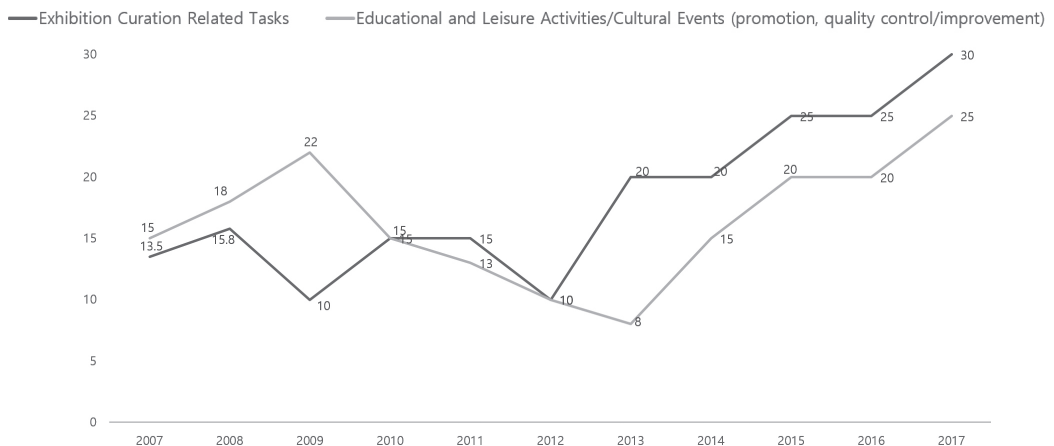
The Figure 5 shows a slight rise in the weight of art collection related tasks and a dip in exhibition related tasks in 2009. This is a similar pattern to that of Figure 1, where a lesser portion was given to the visitor count (exhibition related quantifiable result) compared to the museum activities. But the reasoning behind the increase in weight of art collection related tasks in 2009 can be analyzed more in depth by looking at the



internal situation of MMCA in the previous year. In 2008, the 16<sup>th</sup> director of MMCA was dismissed by a special audit, which convicted the director for wrongdoing in the process of art collecting. This result of this audit was later proved through a lawsuit as a falsely enforced decision, which could have been executed against the director who in the previous years had projected his political inclination and opposition for the reforms (performance management and further incorporation) of MMCA. It can be argued that due to this infamous situation, the performance goal of 2009 and the evaluation result temporarily included more details regarding the task of art collecting.

When comparing the three index weights of CCMs (fig. 5), generally the research related task was the least emphasized measure, followed by the art collection and lastly the exhibition. From 2016, a research task was not included in the composition of performance evaluation, which means that both in the goal setting and evaluation process this task was no longer specified and considered as a targeted performance. On the other hand, the exhibition related task gradually grew in the index weight from 2012 and reached the highest portion of 30% in 2017. During the 10 years of evaluation, the 30% weight in the exhibition related tasks is the highest of all, which overrides the total index weight of promoting/improving the educational and leisure/cultural activities (highest in 2017 with 25%) and constructing/planning of MMCA Seoul (highest in 2012 with 25%). The comparison of exhibition curation and activities related index weight in Figure 6 makes it more evident that the emphasis of exhibition curation increased greatly from 2013 and had been the most weighted evaluated performance.

**Figure 6: Weight (%) of Exhibition Curation and Activities Related Tasks from 2007 to 2017**

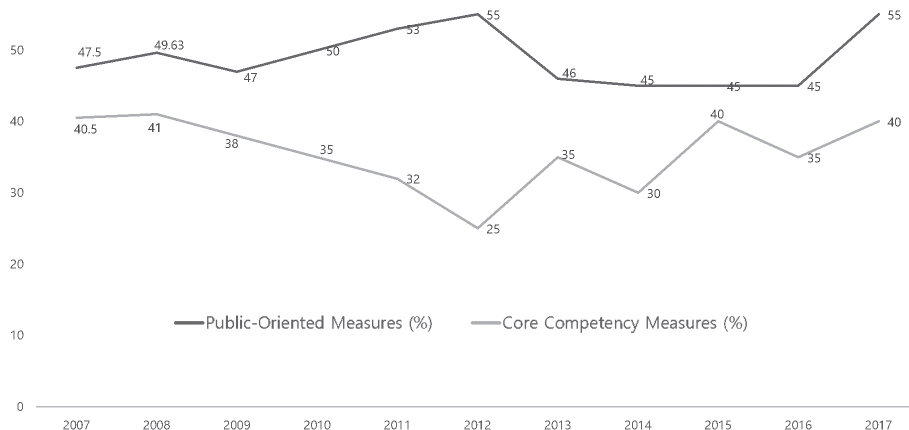


It can be argued that the drastically different trend in research and exhibition performance measures as part of the CCMs means the performance that is more visible, quantifiable and measurable in tangible return gained growing emphasis in the annual evaluation, similar to the analysis result of the POMs. The exhibition related task growing in index weight beyond 20% since 2013 is in alignment with the inauguration of MMCA Seoul, which contains the newly built large exhibition spaces that are easily accessible. For MMCA, the quality of exhibition became

a much more emphasized performance to be managed, and in return art collection and research related tasks were considered with less significance in the evaluation.

For the last part of the analysis of performance evaluation results of MMCA, the POMs and CCMs in total are compared in Figure 7. The chronological analysis of the total percentage of POMs shows a growing trend from 2009 to 2012, which is during the MMCA Seoul construction period. And during the same period, the CCMs gradually decreased in total proportion. As a totality, the CCMs occupied less proportion of MMCA performance evaluation composition compared to the POMs every year since the performance management was implicated. Overall, the MMCA is evidently managed in order to become a better servicing space for the public with various activities, larger museum space (new branch), and quality exhibition, going by the analysis of performance evaluation results from 2007 to 2017. Finally, it can be concluded that the performance measures that support the incorporation of MMCA were focused more in the evaluation and this supports the second proposition.

*Figure 7: Weight (%) of Total POMs and CCMs from 2007 to 2017*



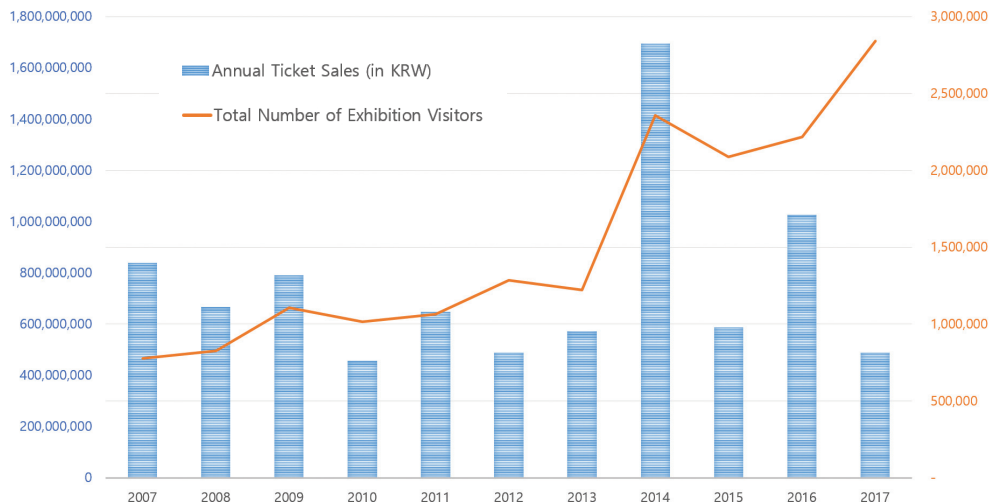
## Discussion and Implication

As the only representative national art museum in South Korea, MMCA has made a significant effort in becoming an active, competent and attractive museum. In support of this direction, the government introduced an open recruitment method in appointing the museum director in 2000 and an institutional reform as executive agency in 2006. These two major changes were to provide an opportunity to capable specialists to be considered as the MMCA director, and for the appointed specialist to autonomously set and achieve the performance goal. Since the agencification of MMCA, the performance management has been in effect to manage and evaluate the enhancement of museum performance annually, and this study was dedicated to analyzing the details (which performance type was managed with how much weight, when and why) of its mechanism.

A meaningful finding regarding the consequence of performance management in MMCA was that it had been provoking to achieve the performance goals that are directorship term based, better noticeable and quantifiable, and most urgent. Con-

structuring and inaugurating the MMCA Seoul within four years is a typical example of the mechanism of performance management and directorship efforts working hand in hand for monumental progress. In reality the building of MMCA Seoul was without a doubt a major step forward in the organization of MMCA towards creating a profitable business situation. And this new branch was a long awaited demand and desire of the Korean art society, since the reopening of the MMCA Deoksugung branch in 1998. The data shows that the MMCA as a unit of three branches had enabled the increment of at least 500,000 to over 1,000,000 museum visitors per year (fig. 8), but even with this expansion, the attempt to reform MMCA into a corporate body had failed. Many issues need to be discussed surrounding this topic, and delving into this matter requires a separate study in the future. However, a few issues can be addressed by using the data and information gathered for this study: the intervention of government in ticket price and directorship stability.

**Figure 8: Number of Exhibition Visitors and Annual Ticket Sales of MMCA, in annual report**



Paradoxically in Figure 8, the MMCA's exhibition related performance result presents the trend of an increase or decrease in annual ticket sales (in Korean won) not correlating with the changing pattern of exhibition visitor numbers. This is mainly due to the cultural policy, which began to be enforced strongly from 2010 to provide free or discounted exhibition admission for a larger public. The problem is that the subjects who benefit from this policy have fluctuated over time and as a result, the profit generating mechanism through ticket sales became much more complex to predict. From a management perspective, a natural response to the uncertain relationship between the popularity and profitability in art exhibitions is to invest less in promotion and publicity, even in quality improvement. It was mentioned multiple times previously that exhibition curation is one of the main tasks of an art museum that requires growing investment in order to provide a more unique and different experience to the visitors. This responsibility is more important when the competition in the cultural sector intensifies and

the need for the museum to self-sustain increases. However, once the expected measure regarding this performance becomes difficult to manage, dissonance may occur within the organization (curators and manager) and also between the people who demand (the public) and those who provide (arts organizations).

On a different note, the MMCA directors who have led the organization since agencification attempted to positively receive and respond to the 21<sup>st</sup> century trend of global museum management, which is to better self-sustain and more flexibly self-govern. What role did the performance management take in this situation and is MMCA in need of such management? And what are the consequences of this management method and issues that need solutions for the future?

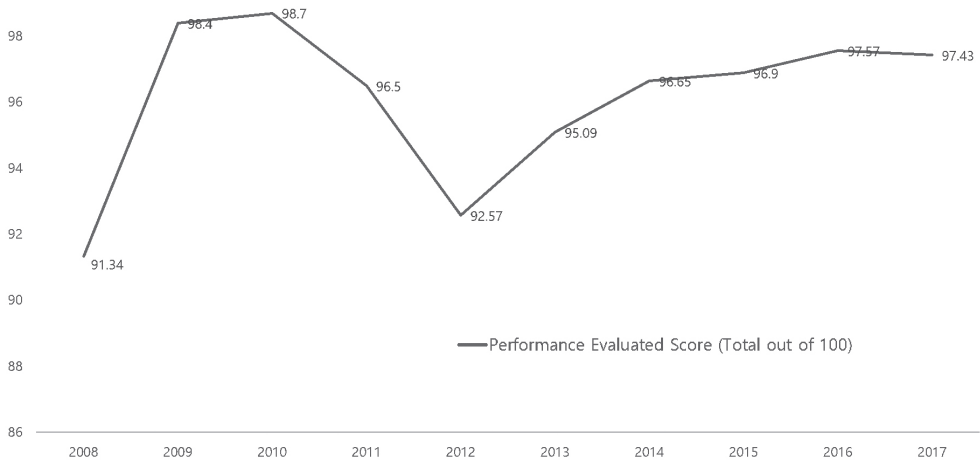
It can be argued that performance management, the evaluation part particularly, has been signaling as a moderating tool for the government in engaging with the performance of MMCA and its directors. In the South Korean context, the directors of the national museum had to simultaneously satisfy the public and the government, while managing the museum as a competitive and professional institution. But too much responsibility was given to a single person, and expectation was too high for a short term contract-based leadership. The problem with this three year directorship term is that in the first year the tasks that were planned in the previous term had to be pursued, then, starting from the second year, more personalized leadership and directorship can come in effect. But the evident performance result has to be presented within two years, or the leadership shifts again. This makes the museum organization target achievements that visualize or at least become measurable within a few years. As a result, in the case of MMCA, the growth of professional competency in a systematic manner was considered less as a mission and each directorship focusing on different elements of museum tasks in the long run had weakened the continuity in development.

It has been suggested from the beginning of this study that performance management can be a governing tool that supports the museum directors working towards the incorporation and enhancing the museum performance to better prepare for this future reform. The findings of the performance evaluation result analysis from 2007 to 2017 support this proposition, and the chronologically changing trends of performance index weight show growing emphasis on the directorship term related, urgent and more quantifiable performance, which are important factors in achieving the incorporation of MMCA with strong leadership and government support. In particular, the internal situation and timely concerns regarding the directorship of MMCA were directly reflected in the immediate performance evaluation, which made the improvable issues/matters easier to discern and emphasize for the directors and evaluators.

But the problem occurred with the aggressively pursued special/periodic audits in the history of MMCA that targeted the directorship transition. The unprepared discontinuity and prolonged absence of directorship made the performance management reform as a whole appear as a political engagement pathway to constrain the museum. As a result, the public awareness of the national art museum and the governmental role in managing it was damaged immensely. On the other hand, a different type of problem existed regarding the evaluation mechanism working too friendly with the directorship. For example, when the total/final performance score

is considered solely as a score above 95 was given except in 2008 and 2012 (fig. 9), and even in these two lowest scoring years above 90 was given. Such a final evaluation score appears merely as a positive feedback with weak judgment being made of the yearlong performance within the MMCA.

**Figure 9: The Final MMCA Performance Score in Total, out of 100%**



It is not impossible to argue that the performance of MMCA was beyond the A (90+) grade ever since the performance management was applied. But the evaluation result still does appear lenient in nature, because it does not include any form of performance enhancement tracking system. Also, there is no standardized process in the goal setting and negotiation effort among the government-director-organization, the number of group meetings for performance evaluation fluctuate from 1 to 3 times, and the indicators developed in such a short evaluation period (within a month) are obscure. Another issue exists in the grouping of MMCA performance evaluators and how frequently the same person reappears as an evaluation group or operation council member. More diverse voices need to be reflected in the evaluation process, and specialists in the management and public administration (organization, finance and strategic business etc.) have to be included as a significant portion of the evaluation group. As a last remark, it is important to remember that in order to effectively utilize performance management in a museum setting, first goal setting, then ways of tracking progress, such as fixating the definition of performance and standardizing evaluation criteria, have to be understood clearly between the museum organization and the director in charge, and among the government, the performance evaluators and the museum.

## Conclusion

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea is a museum that over 2,500,000 people visited to view its exhibition in 2017. In the era of Superstar Museums, the MMCA has thrived to grow and find balance between the market force and governmental engagement. This study argued that the performance man-

agement of MMCA had a beneficial side in promoting the result-based performance specifically, but also had weakness in maintaining long term stability and continuity in development. The concluding consequence of performance management in MMCA was that the organizational performance of achieving quantifiable and evident-based results became more easily distinguishable, and so the performance with these qualities became more influential to the understanding/evaluation of directorship competency. Further research can include more cases in different parts of the world, since this study focused on a particular case in South Korea. Compiling the historical and contextual differences in a comparative form can enhance the understanding of performance management in the arts and cultural sector.

In theory, performance management can function as an ideal tool for the checks and balances of the performance improvement, under the condition of clearly and specifically set goals with a fair and critical evaluation mechanism. Also it has been considered as a “key determinant” for performance improvement (Moynihan & Pandey, 2004, p. 421), and was adopted widely in high hopes. In South Korea, the benchmarking of many western theories, ideas and concepts happens abundantly, even when the tendency of its people, culture and developmental history are different in many ways. The public art museums were not exempt, even though the performance management of arts organizations, not only the goal setting and evaluation part but also the abstractness of performance itself, increases the threat of misinterpreting the management effect. Therefore, implementing the idea of competitive management to the national art museum must be questioned in regards to the “responsible government doing the right thing for its people”.

In the past 20 years, the total number of art museums in South Korea increased from less than 50 to over 250. During this time of massive growth in the number of art museums, many cultural policies were introduced, administrative reform has occurred in many cultural institutions, and Korean’s understanding and appreciation of art have grown. Also the global perception of Korean art and its market power have strengthened. However, it appears as though the only national art museum in Korea, the MMCA, has not yet been brought to complete fruition. This is due to the lack of understanding of its organization, consequences of the previous and future reforms and the impact of leadership and executive transition. Therefore, more research regarding these areas and the museum’s relationship with the creative industry, its visitors and local economy need to be pursued to find the best way to manage and govern. As a final note, it is important to acknowledge that visitors and their willingness to engage is the foundation of the museum experience. When the public develop a keener sense of creativity, enjoy and invest in cultural activities and art collecting often, and fully understand and finally appreciate their cultural heritage and identity, then art collections and curated exhibitions in art museums, which suggest a new way of seeing, approaching and presenting, can serve more functions and create more synergy.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*The author would like to extend appreciation to Jesse Campbell and Tobin Im for their thoughtful and resourceful comments and suggestions in the developmental process of this paper.*

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